

Control of your words

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Proverbs 10:31; 12:13, 14, 17 & 18; 15:1,2 &28; 16:23,24; 17:27,28;  
18:18,21; 25:11 & 15

Each one of us has experienced impacts from someone's words. I remembered the words and encouragements from my high school Biology teacher. He cared about my understanding of the subject, and he encouraged and praised me when I did well in the test. At the end of the course, I was the best in the class. Next year, I took his advance Physiology class, and at the end I was the number one in the class. Often, the lasting effect of positive words is stronger and longer than you thought. It is also true for negative words. The Bible has many teachings on the control of our speech, and a lot of them found in the book of Proverbs.

### 1. The positive words

One of the characteristics of Proverbs is use of illustration. Proverbs 16:24 illustrates positive words as "Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones." It is so sweet and wonderful that it up-lifts your soul and spirit, and provides healing and comfort to your stressed mind and body.

#### Types of words and the benefits

Appropriate and thoughtful words will lighten up the situation and can make the result/atmosphere even more pleasing (Proverbs 25:11).

A gentle answer turns away wrath (Proverbs 15:1). It can "Cool off" the opponent.

A soft-tongue and gentle speech can change the opponent's position or break an "impossible" situation (Proverbs 25:15). One Bible translation uses "breaks down rigid defenses".

Positive words include truthful words and shows honesty (Proverbs 12:17)

Wise words bring healing (Proverbs 12:18)

Mouth of a godly person gives wise advice (Proverbs 10:31)

The above only list some of them. The key point of Proverbs 12:14 is positive words can result in many benefits.

### 2. The negative words

Often people think negative words hurt others only. But the truth is that it often hurts yourself also (Proverbs 12:13). I remember a friend of mind told about her mistake. She was not able to control her emotion when she tried very hard to teach her son when he was small, and said to her son “You are dumb!” Years later, her son still remembers that and she regards it all these years.

Proverbs 18:21 states “The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.” Negative words can destroy people.

### 3. The approach to use your words

#### a. Your heart

The words from our mouth come from our heart (Proverbs 16:23, Matthew 12:34). Thus, we need to keep our heart pure and holy. The heart of the godly thinks carefully before speaking. (Proverbs 15:28). We can always pray to God to help us as in Psalms 141:3.

#### b. Your intent

Build others up (Eph. 4:29)

Comfort others and bring healing (II Cor. 1:4, Proverbs 12:18)

Don't answer if you don't know or not at a proper situation (Proverbs 17:27,28; James 1:19)

#### c. Clarity

I Cor. 14:9 “So also you, unless you utter by the tongue speech that is clear, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air. (New American Standard Bible)”. Once you speak, ensure it is clear to the listener of what you try to say.

We all know the first and only intended nuclear bomb destruction onto Japan that killed many lives in World War II. That was a very tragic event. On July 1945, an ultimatum to Japan was issued by the Allied powers (USA, Britain and Soviet Union). Here are the two sides in communication: 1) the ultimatum did not detail the action as immediate destruction nor about nuclear attack, and 2) the Japan's response used a Japanese' word that can have two meanings- not able to respond now or not agree to the ultimatum. Some people believe if the communication was clearer, that event can be avoided.

In summary, think from your heart and mind carefully before you speak and use positive words as much as possible. Be sure your intent is clear.